

"I'd expect that within the first 100 days in office he'll propose approval of fast-track authority," said Sidney Weintraub, an economist at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and a former deputy assistant secretary of state for international finance and development.

Even though Republicans narrowly control the House of Representatives, Mr. Bush will need to reach across the aisle to Democrats for help in getting fast-track authority approved. Mr. Weintraub expects that the need for bipartisan cooperation will provide Democrats an opportunity to attach environment and labor standards to the bill, although Mr. Bush has made it clear that he does not support such standards if they are too rigidly drawn.

In negotiating a trade deal, Mr. Bush would also have to heed strongly voiced opposition to such side agreements from some Latin American nations, led by Brazil, that fear that labor and environmental standards attached to a trade deal could be used as protectionist shields by American businesses that feel threatened by Latin American competition.

In a campaign speech in Miami in August, Mr. Bush said the Clinton administration dropped the ball on Latin America after losing the legislative battle to win fast-track authority. In the speech, he said that by the time the third Summit of the Americas meets, a fast-track bill will already have been introduced in Congress.

"When the next president sits at the Americas Summit in Quebec next April, other nations must know that fast-track authority is on the way," he said during the campaign.

Although Mr. Bush criticized President Clinton for stalling the drive for a free trade agreement of the Americas, the process has actually been chugging along, though largely out of sight. Negotiating teams have continued to work on technical details, and when trade officials gather in Quebec, a substantial framework for the trade negotiations leading to a 2005 deal will be in place.

"The 2005 date was set at the first Americas Summit in Miami in 1994 and reconfirmed at the second in Santiago," said Richard E. Feinberg, a former senior director of the National Security Council's Office of Inter-American Affairs under President Clinton and now a professor at the graduate school of international relations at the University of California in San Diego. "All the major players remain committed to the 2005 date."

During the campaign, Mr. Bush talked about developing a "special relationship" with Mexico, which is one of the few foreign countries he has ever visited. Referring more broadly to all of Latin America, he said he would "look south, not as an afterthought but as a fundamental commitment of my presidency."

As governor of a border state, Mr. Bush has had a front-row seat on the expansion of international trade, and the effect on Texas has been substantial. According to a recent study by the Council of the Americas, Texas exports to Mexico have more than doubled since NAFTA came into force in 1994.

Mr. Bush will not have to worry about union opposition to new international trade deals as much as Vice President Al Gore would have, but there is a segment of the Republican Party that has become increasingly protectionist and could complicate any trade deal. That could force Mr. Bush to take a page from Mr. Clinton's playbook and cast increased trade in political and strategic terms, as Mr. Clinton did in winning a trade vote on China.

Mr. Bush had promised to meet with Mexico's president, Vicente Fox Quesada, even be-

fore Mr. Fox was inaugurated on Dec. 1, a signal that the administrations of both countries, starting at roughly the same time, would work in tandem to resolve common problems like illegal immigration, illicit drugs and environmental pollution. Because of the extraordinary delays in the American election, the meeting never took place, but Mr. Bush sent a congratulatory message to Mr. Fox on the day of his inauguration.

Mr. Fox has already taken a preemptive lead on some of these areas. During the summer he visited Mr. Clinton and both presidential candidates, and talked freely about his ideas for deepening NAFTA and taking measures to reduce barriers that prevent Mexican workers from entering the United States to find work.

Mr. Fox's ideas were not warmly embraced by either Democrats or Republicans, and a close relationship with him and Mexico could put Mr. Bush into a difficult position with members of his own party.

"He will, as he said, have a 'special relationship' with Mexico, but the question now is what kind of relationship will it be," said Larry Birns, director of the Council on Hemispheric Affairs in Washington, who supported Mr. Gore. "Here is where a Bush presidency might run into real trouble."

[From the Miami Herald, May 30, 2001]

GIVING HAITI A CHANCE

(By Larry Birns and Sarah Townes)

Haiti's seemingly eternal malaise is, if anything, worsening as a result of disruptive local politics, shrill rhetoric and the near elimination of overseas assistance.

Even though President Jean-Bertrand Aristide (who last November again won the presidency by a huge margin) agreed to a number of mischievous conditions for U.S. aid to resume, Washington has given no indication that it would be forthcoming. The U.S. campaign of economic asphyxiation and political isolation is not only unseemly, but also gravely damaging to U.S. interests.

If this policy continues unaltered, it could bring added turmoil to the island, inevitably followed by renewed efforts of desperate Haitians willing to risk the dangerous 800-mile voyage to Florida.

Such an exodus would greatly embarrass the Bush White House, just as it did the Clinton administration, particularly as the interdiction pact has now lapsed.

The "Democratic Convergence," a 15-party coalition of mainly micro-factions that vehemently reject Aristide's legitimacy based on charges of electoral fraud in last May's senatorial balloting, has named Gerard Gourgue "Provisional President." This is bringing chaos closer. Gourgue called for the return of the commanders of Haiti's repressive armed forces, expelled by the U.S. military in 1994.

Despite its modest popular standing, the convergence effectively has been awarded a crippling de facto veto by Sen. Jesse Helms, Aristide's relentless avenger, with U.S. policymakers also insisting that it is the democratic alternative.

The convergence is the main obstacle to negotiations and the resumption of aid. Aristide first met with its leaders in February to discuss possible solutions to the stalemate. Regrettably, his offer to include some convergence leaders in his government and appoint a new impartial electoral body were peremptorily rejected. Aristide's call for initiating a dialogue also was rejected by the convergence, though he has offered to move up the next round of legislative elections.

The State Department and National Security Council always have viewed Aristide as a liability rather than as the island's principal political asset. Allegations against him routinely understate his wide support. Aristide towers over potential alternatives and has worked hard to cooperate with Washington's often arrogant demands.

In December, the Clinton administration agreed to restore aid once the Haitian leader adopted eight conditions that addressed electoral and economic reforms along with narcotics smuggling, illegal migration and human-rights violations. Later, Aristide agreed to all of them.

After several requests by Haiti for help in addressing the election issue, the Organization of American States belatedly decided to dispatch a delegation to discuss election reforms. Since Washington largely determines OAS Haiti policy, its initiative's bona fides will require scrutiny.

LITTLE SUPPORT

There is a danger here, which comes far less from the fact that relatively few Haitians have any respect for the opposition coalition. Any outside imposed government and revitalized military, as hinted by Gourgue, could destroy the country's fragile human-rights situation, its enfeebled judicial system and its lame democratization process.

The Bush administration would do well to honor the commitments made by President Clinton.

Failing to display some basic amity to Haiti's population will only add more yellowed pages to the profoundly jaundiced and mean-spirited links to Port-au-Prince, which historically have been characterized by condescension rather than respect.

[From the Columbia, Missouri, Tribune Online, July 8, 2000]

CITIZENS OF PERU LEFT TO FIGHT FOR NATION'S DEMOCRACY

Editor, the Tribune: Scores of women, clad in black and carrying coffins symbolizing the death of democracy in Peru, Marched through the streets of Lima on June 28m demanding new balloting in protest of President Alberto Fujimori's scandal-ridden reelection. As the march headed toward the hotel hosting the Organization of American States delegation, the women faced a barrage of tear gas from the security forces. The OAS, much like the United States, has been largely ineffective in trying to promote democracy in what has become Fujimori country. Like a couple of ill-whelped dogs, the OAS and the United States have skulked away from the indignant attitude of "El Chino" and left the Peruvian people to be the sole defenders of the nation's democracy.

Even with the recent OAS proposal to reform the system, there are no guarantees that the government will follow the guidelines. In fact, Fujimori has amply shown that he has nothing but contempt for both OAS secretary-general César Gaviria and the Clinton administration, but as the police attack on the women's march reveals—and as Bastille Day approaches—he does indeed have good grounds to fear the citizenry who will no longer tolerate his false claims to power. Where else can change begin but at home? Hopefully, the recent mass demonstrations will spark positive change toward democratic reforms even if a feckless OAS is unable to mandate new elections.